BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

SHEIKH MUZAFFER OZAK AL-JERRAHI

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HAZRETI MARYAM

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Grand Sheikh
The Halveti-Jerrahi Order of Dervishes

Translation from the Original Turkish
Muhtar Holland

Foreword, Introduction and Afterword
Nur al-Jerrahi

ASHKI BOOK

PIR PRESS

Editor
Louis Rogers

Cover: Calligraphy of the Seal
of the Halveti-Jerrahi Order of Dervishes

Published by
Pir Publications, Inc.
Colonial Green
256 Post Road East
Westport, Connecticut 06880

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First Edition
ISBN: 1-879708-04-3
Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 91-090254

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FOREWORD

This small volume presents an inspired litany of praise to the Virgin Mary by a contemporary Sufi master from Istanbul. His is not a theological or an academic essay. The very structure of this evocative work is nonlinear, transcending the usual laws of logic and habitual experience which the Virgin Birth of the beloved Jesus also transcends.

This long prose-poem is a spiritual seed which will be sown in the heart of the sympathetic reader with palpable initiatory power. A mystical virgin birth will then occur within the receptive heart - a miraculous birth of purity and illumination, comparable to the experience of the blessed Mary.

Virginity is not primarily a biological condition but a spiritual state. To be a virgin, male or female, is to give oneself entirely to God, only to the living Truth. From the noble ranks of such virgin souls come the gnostic saints of fourteen centuries of Islam. They have elevated Islamic tradition in their native cultures across the entire planet to the highest degree of mystical insight and ecstatic experience - absolute conscious unity.

The author of this work, Sheikh Muzaffer Ozak, passed from the visible world in 1985. He is a *Waliullah*, or intimate friend of Allah, as saints are referred to in Islamic tradition. Islam has proven to be an overflowing fountain of these indescribable friends of God, both recognized and unrecognized. The profound Islamic veneration of the Virgin Mary is certainly part of the explanation for this remarkable

flourishing of mystics. As Christian masters acknowledge, intense veneration of Mary and meditation on her virginity is what produces many saints.

Readers from a Christian cultural background should be forewarned that this Islamically devout poem on the Virgin Mary may strike certain discordant notes in the traditional sensibility of Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant believers. The Islamic and Christian lovers of the Virgin Mother of Jesus breathe different atmospheres. And why not? They represent two distinct global traditions, each with its own spiritual integrity, beauty and power. May love itself bring them together!

INTRODUCTION

"Effendi, today is the Feast of the Nativity of the Virgin in Eastern Orthodox Christianity. The Virgin Mary is the bridge between Christians and Muslims."

This was an apparently casual remark I made to the venerable author of this book when he was visiting New York from Istanbul, early in the decade of the 1980's. Muzaffer Ozak responded to my words without any hesitation, as this Grand Sheikh of an ancient Dervish Order always generously responded to life:

"*Insha-allah* (God willing), I will compose a book about the blessed Maryam, Virgin Mother of the beloved Jesus, upon him be peace."

Effendi immediately called for an Arabic Quran in order to read aloud two key revelations concerning the blessed Mary (Surah Three, verses forty-five to fifty-five, and Surah Nineteen, verses sixteen to thirty-six). The particular Quran which appeared instantly, carried by a devoted dervish, happened to be a beautiful antique edition, bound in light blue leather.

I remarked to the Sheikh that sky blue is the color esoterically connected with the Virgin Mary in Christian tradition. Muzaffer Ozak - eyes shining, large frame animated with delight - simply nodded as he opened the sole scripture of fourteen centuries of Islam. Unusual spiritual signs were precisely what he expected.

Islam blossomed in the seventh century of the Common Era within a cultural environment

permeated by the prophetic wisdom of Judaism and by the gnostic Christian teachings of the Arabian peninsula. Muhammad the Messenger elevated his childhood religion - indigenous to Arabia and transmitted to him by his blessed mother, Amina - directly into the stream of Biblical Prophets that began with Adam, Noah and Abraham. This is the lineage which later flowered as historical Judaism through the noble Moses and, from that base of Torah, as Christianity, through the beloved Jesus.

Finally, the same lineage manifested through the beloved Muhammad as Arabic Islam. This entire revelatory drama from Adam onward is revealed in the Holy Quran as universal Islam, submission to the One God, through a beautiful life of prayer and moral rectitude.

This ancient prophetic lineage is not simply a male phenomenon. Mothers - in Islam as well as her sister traditions, Judaism and Christianity - hold a high spiritual station and responsibility.

A companion once asked the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace: "Who is the most important person for the soul in Islam?"

The Messenger of Allah replied in his usual laconic style: "The mother." The companions always pressed the Messenger for wisdom. "Who is the next most important person?" Once more this noble human being replied: "The mother."

The same question was repeated a third time, and the same answer was forthcoming. Finally, on the fourth repetition of this question, the Prophet responded: "The father."

Often the beloved Muhammad was heard to proclaim, somewhat enigmatically: "Paradise lies at the feet of the mothers." Among all the blessed mothers of humanity, Maryam, the Virgin Mother of Jesus, and Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet, hold the greatest sway over the Muslim heart. Maryam's position is even more exalted than Amina, the mother of Muhammad. Why? Because Mary appears prominently in the Holy Quran, which is not the utterance of Muhammad but the Voice of Allah, transmitted through this noble human person during profound states of prophetic consciousness.

The Muhammadan reunification of the entire prophetic tradition flowed from the Messenger's own reliable transcendental experience. The subtle harmonics of this process are much too rich and complex for this brief introduction.

Let us simply consider a few points.

The Holy Quran echos the midrashic wisdom of Jewish lore, such as in the Quranic history of Abraham's enlightenment experience through successive contemplation of evening star, full moon and rising sun.

The miracle performed by the child Jesus in which a bird formed from clay and breathed upon by him takes life and flies before his mother's astonished gaze is shared by the Holy Quran with certain apocryphal Christian Gospels.

Allah Most High praises the desert fathers and mothers of ancient Christianity as dedicated lovers of God who have renounced the world to live in nearness to God, and whose eyes overflow with tears upon

recognizing the Divine Words of the Quran as living Truth.

The very term *quran* appears to be nonarabic in origin, related to the ancient Syriac word meaning *recitation* which the desert fathers used for their five times daily recitation from the Psalms of David, accompanied in oriental Christian tradition with prostrations of repentance and submission. In ancient Syriac Christian missionary sermons, recorded in Arabic, we encounter an imagery of hellfire almost identical with certain Quranic passages.

The original prophetic experience of the noble Muhammad, received at the age of forty when this devout man was fasting and praying in a cave on Mount Hira, involved the visitation and crushing embrace of the Archangel Gabriel. A relative of Muhammad's wife and first disciple, the venerable Khadijah, was knowledgeable about Jewish esoteric lore and provided an interpretation of this overwhelming experience, which left the Prophet shivering, covered in blankets by his tender wife.

This person proclaimed: "Yours is a prophetic call, just as those experienced by the ancient Prophets of Israel. You must be the next one in that august lineage, the one who is expected."

The prophethood of Muhammad was perceived and confirmed when he was a boy, according to Islamic Oral Tradition, by a Christian desert father who descended from his mountain retreat to pay respects to the young boy, whose prophetic light he had perceived clairvoyantly, radiating above the caravan camped for the night in the wilderness. This advanced monk, upon investigation, discovered the mystical Seal

of Prophecy as an auspicious birthmark between the shoulder blades of the pure-hearted youth.

Finally, concerning the subject of the present volume, many details from the sacred hymns of the Eastern Orthodox Church, sung on Feastdays of the Virgin, run parallel with the Islamic devotion to the blessed Mary. Both Quranic passages and the traditions of the Eastern Church report the Christ Child speaking from his cradle as well as his Virgin Mother receiving special fruits from the angels when she was presented to the Temple and lived there as a young girl.

By mentioning just a few of the many resonances shared by these noble traditions, I am obviously not implying that Islam is a derivative of her sister traditions. Divine Revelation came down through the Messenger of Allah like a bolt of lightening, creating a new tradition.

I am simply underscoring the Quranic teaching that one universal religion has been carefully handed down and then divinely revealed anew through various unique prophetic dispensations.

The spiritual harmony between Christianity and Islam is summed up by a beautiful saying of Muhammad, upon him be peace: "Whoever loves Jesus and me receives a double blessing." What other world-religion has acknowledged this level of correspondence with the preceeding tradition?

There are, of course, certain theological differences between the Christian and Islamic understanding of the spiritual nature of the beloved Jesus, whose exalted epithet in Islam is *Ruhullah*, the Spirit of Allah. It is understandable that distinct teachings should exist within two great world-religions, each manifesting a

billion member community in the contemporary world - two traditions with a combined evolutionary history of thirty-four centuries.

The One God reveals in His glorious Quran that the differences between His various global revelations will be clarified by Him alone at the culmination of time. This Divine Assurance clearly implies that our task is to achieve spiritual harmony and love for all humanity without exception, rather than to engage in religious debate or warfare.

Elsewhere in the Quran, the Most High explains that He could have unified all nations into a single religious community, but evolved instead a plurality of sacred traditions as a testing for the soul. The soul meets this Divine Test successfully through humility, peacefulness and commitment to the principle of unity, not through hatred or divisiveness.

The Holy Quran reveals that authentic prophets have been sent to every spiritual nation without exception during the long history of humanity. The Word of Allah also proclaims that there should never be any essential distinction made between the messages of these inspired Messengers. Nor should there be the slightest compulsion in the way of universal religion, states the Quran.

True religion cannot be imposed from the outside, but is natural to the human soul, which is called the *crown of creation* and the *representative of Allah* in Quranic teaching.

Islam shares the deep understanding of Eastern Orthodox Christianity that the human soul possesses a more exalted spiritual station than angels or even archangels. Before the beginning of time, the Holy

Quran teaches, Allah requested the entire angelic host to bow before the transcendental Adam, the archetype of every precious human soul. Why? Because the human spirit is the very Divine Breath, breathed into an intricate biological vessel, evolved by Divine Grace and Power through natural cosmic law. One can only bow before the Divine Essence. Humanity enshrines that essence.

Both Muslims and Christians accept the Virgin Birth of the beloved Jesus and both vast communities accept his mysterious bodily ascension into Paradise. Both traditions also faithfully await the palpable Second Coming of Jesus the Messiah, as he is referred to in the Holy Quran. Therefore, concerning the miraculous appearance and disappearance of Jesus, Christians and Muslims are in accord.

Their differences center around the proper mystical interpretation of his spiritual nature and of the strange mystery of the crucifixion. Both communities can accept the essential ineffability of these subjects and both can sincerely embrace the Divine Messengers, Jesus and Muhammad, each believer cherishing his or her own intimate intuition.

Some Muslims share the view of various apocryphal Christian gospels that another individual was inadvertantly crucified in the place of Jesus. Other Islamic mystics contend that Allah All-Powerful, who can bring any being or event into existence simply by proclaiming the Divine Command, *Be!*, created the appearance of Jesus' crucifixion in the eyes of the beholders, leaving his precious person essentially untouched.

Concerning the spiritual nature of Jesus, profound Christian theologians down the centuries have always

insisted upon the completeness of his humanity, including not only a perfectly human body, but a perfectly human mind and will. For hundreds of years, bishops of the Church were proclaimed heretical for failing to accept the complete humanity of Jesus, because they were dazzled by the mystery of his oneness with God. The astonishing mystery of perfect conscious Unity exists in Islam as well as in Christianity.

As Jesus could proclaim: "I am the Divine Way, the Divine Truth and the Divine Life", so the Sufi mystic Mansur al-Hallaj, his limited self consumed in ecstasy, proclaimed in Arabic, *Ana-l-Haqq,* "I am the Divine Truth." Countless souls are elevated by Allah Most High, even while they are still manifesting on earth, into the ineffable experience of union, which the Holy Quran describes as *near, nearer than near, and even nearer than that*. Muslims are lovers of Jesus, upon him be peace, who consistently uphold the fullness of his sanctified humanity. May Allah be pleased with all those who love Him and His Messengers!

Concerning the dispute over Christian trinitarian teaching, we should bear in mind that the Eastern Church always refers to the Trinity as *one in essence and undivided*. There is absolutely no question here of three Gods or of any essential division in the Divine Nature. Sheikh Muzaffer, the broad-minded author of this book, once remarked: "There is no problem with the Trinity, by which Christians simply indicate the Divine Attributes *Yarabb* (Godhead), *Ya Rahman* and *Ya Rahim* (the ever-manifesting, ever-descending Divine Compassion and Divine Mercy)."

Once a Muslim asked Sheikh Muzaffer: "Effendi, why is it that we wholeheartedly accept and revere both the Virgin Mother and her beloved son Jesus, yet

Christians, after fourteen centuries, still do not accept the authenticity of our noble Prophet?" Laughing with his usual overflowing good humor, the Grand Sheikh responded simply: "They came first. It is up to us to respect them, not to insist that they respect us."

Another Muslim approached Muzaffer Effendi and inquired: "What will happen on the Day of Judgement to Christian souls who have rejected or even ridiculed the prophethood of the Messenger of Allah?" This large-hearted human being, consummate lover of Divinity and humanity, immediately replied:

"The genuine love that any Christian feels for the Messiah Jesus will be counted as love for the Prophet Muhammad, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon them both. The sincere love that any Jew feels for the noble Abraham and the noble Moses will likewise be counted as love for Muhammad, the Seal of Prophecy. Why? Because Allah Most High teaches clearly in His glorious Quran that all the Divine Messengers share a single essence."

BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

HAZRETI MARYAM

The Virgin Mary, blessed Mother of Jesus, may peace be upon them both, is described in the Glorious Quran, and therefore in all Islamic teaching, as the most sanctified of women. In the following verses, the Holy Quran proclaims her as the paragon of virtue and purity, surpassed by none before her as the supreme expression of womanhood.

And the angels said: "Mary, Allah has selected you and purified you. He has chosen you above all womankind. O Mary, be devoted to your Lord. Prostrate yourself and bow with those who bow in worship." (Q.3:42-43)

from Blessed Virgin Mary
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CHAPTER ONE

BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

In the Name of Allah,
Merciful and Compassionate

All praise be to Allah,
Lord of the Worlds,
with blessings and peace
upon our Prophet Muhammad,
his family and his companions

The Virgin Mary, blessed mother of Jesus, may peace be upon them both, is described in the Glorious Quran, and therefore in all Islamic teaching, as the most sanctified of women. In the following verses, the Holy Quran proclaims her as the paragon of virtue and purity, surpassed by none before her as the supreme expression of womanhood.

And the angels said: "O Mary, Allah has selected you and purified you. He has chosen you above all womankind. O Mary, be devoted to your Lord. Prostrate yourself and bow with those who bow in worship." (Q.3:42-43)

Allah offers the blessed Mary as an example for all those who believe: *Mary, 'Imrān's daughter, guarded*

her virginity, so We breathed Our Holy Spirit into her, and she confirmed the truth of the words of her Lord, and she was one of those who are devoted. (Q.66:12)

It is generally considered that all Prophets have been male, but there are some profound scholars who recognize Mary to be a soul of prophetic stature. This conclusion is based on the Holy Quran, which reports that Angel Gabriel the Trustworthy visited the Virgin on several occasions. This is sufficient proof, as the blessed Archangel descends only to Prophets.

The One God experienced no difficulty in creating the venerable Adam from dust, then creating Eve from Adam. He brought the rest of humanity into being through the union of mother and father. It is another manifestation of Allah's Omnipotence that the beloved Jesus was created without a father, born spontaneously from the Virgin Mary.

This is a sign to us, His humble servants, that Allah's every intention becomes manifest in perfect accord with His Divine Will. The limitless Creator is not bound by limited laws of logic or nature.

We beg to affirm that Allah the Resplendent is capable of creating and bringing forth as He wills, whatever He wills. Allah created Adam by His Will. Just as He created the blessed Eve from the venerable Adam, without a mother, so did He create the noble Jesus from the Virgin Mary, without a father.

The Supreme Reality is unfettered and all-prevailing. He acts as He wishes, with infinite knowledge and power.

Whenever the Resplendent One wishes to create, He has only to give the command *Be!*, and what is divinely commanded immediately appears.

Muslims are entrusted with the crown of faith and are called the faithful ones, because of their absolute confidence in the Omnipotence of Allah.

They believe in the special creation of Jesus, just as they believe in that of Adam, for Allah declares in the Holy Quran that the fatherless creation of Jesus was like the creation of Adam.

The Holy Bible declares that Jesus is the New Adam, the Son of Man.

Allah is All-Powerful. He is the Judge, we are the judged. He is the Prevailer, we are those prevailed over. He is the Creator, we are creatures. He is the Sovereign, we are humble servants.

He is the Lord of Majesty, free from any deficiency. He is capable of creating and destroying whatever He wills. He can be described only by attributes of perfection. He is adorned by all the attributes of beauty. Triumphant is He in all that He mercifully ordains.

It is He who creates, knows, hears and sees all.

Allah, the One God acknowledged by all Prophets, has brought the entire universe from nothingness into manifestation, making and shaping Adam as a being without precedent, creating Eve spontaneously, bringing into existence the whole history of mankind, living organisms by the millions, angels in eternity and *jinn*, or subtle beings, worlds visible and invisible, dimensions known and unknown.

With the partial intellect, it is impossible for us to understand His infinite manifestation. If the mind is charged with a load beyond its capacity, it comes to a standstill or breaks down beneath the weight.

Where the common intellect cannot extend, is the realm of faith. In recognizing the inadequacy of our faculty of reasoning, we acknowledge, affirm and adore the Omnipotence and Omniscience of Allah.

The sublime point is reached where the believer must sacrifice his intellect to the Power and Knowledge of Allah, where he must surrender his mind to the Truth. The Most High has charged the partial intellect only with those responsibilities that lie within its grasp.

A rightly guided mind fulfills its highest responsibility by turning to face the Truth. Persons of intelligence are at peace in the knowledge that the Lord speaks to humanity through Revelation in words we can clearly comprehend. He teaches us how to recognize the countless signs we are shown of His Omnipotence and Omniscience within our own selves and in the universe around us.

CHAPTER TWO

The Way of Life of the Children of Israel Prior to the Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary

When the Children of Israel had been delivered from the tyranny of Pharaoh, the venerable Prophets, Moses and Aaron, were commanded by Allah Most High to settle their people in the region of Palestine.

This settlement was finally accomplished after forty years of nomadic existence in the Sinai desert. Guided by the Light of Prophecy, the tribes cast away their former cowardice and despondency, acquiring the confidence to develop a highly civilized culture.

The beloved Moses and Aaron were followed by other noble Messengers, including such Prophet-Kings as the venerable David and Solomon. Under the protection of their just government, the community known as the Children of Israel made remarkable progress, taking their place among the civilized nations of that age, and surpassing them all in spiritual awareness.

The Holy Quran confers the title *Representative of Allah* upon only two of the many Prophets. One of these is the venerable Adam and the other is David, may peace be upon him, who belonged to the People of Israel. In His Holy Quran, Allah Most High addresses these words to the Israelites:

O Children of Israel, remember the favor I bestowed upon you, and that I preferred you over all mankind. (Q. 2:47)

For some two thousand years, the Children of Israel enjoyed freedom and sovereignty in the land of Palestine, the birthplace of so many noble Prophets. Because the people often ignored those Divine Messengers, and often acted in defiance of Holy Scripture, they were brought to experience the humiliation of slavery, first under the Assyrians and Babylonians, and eventually under the Romans.

When the Romans conquered Palestine, the administration of Jerusalem was left in the hands of the Chief Rabbi. The Roman Empire recognized the religious freedom of the Children of Israel, and did not interfere with their worship in the sacred Temple. Jerusalem was inhabited by people of many races, speaking a variety of languages, including Syriac, Arabic, Greek, Latin and Hebrew.

At the time of the Virgin Mary's birth, a noble Prophet called Zachariah, may peace be upon him, had been sent by Allah to the Children of Israel. He was entrusted with the care of the Temple. According to some historians, the venerable Zachariah was more than a hundred and twenty years old and his wife had reached the age of ninety-nine.

To their great sorrow, she had not borne any children. The noble Zachariah had prayed to Allah for years, both night and day, begging his Lord to grant them a devoted son to succeed him as spiritual leader of the Israelites and to summon his people to Supreme Truth.

Zachariah's wife was long past the age of child-bearing.

But is anything impossible for Allah Most High?

The Prophet continued to live in patience and hope.

The prayer of supplication is the most powerful form of worship. It is the humble weapon of the faithful ones.

The venerable Zachariah redoubled his supplications when his sister-in-law, Hanna, finally gave birth to a daughter after many years of marriage to his brother, °Imrān. The baby was named Maryam.

Having made a spiritual vow to dedicate her child to the service of the Temple, Hanna entrusted the young girl Maryam to the spiritual guidance of her brother-in-law, Zachariah.

When the blessed Zachariah heard that his brother's wife, previously barren, had given birth to a child, he bowed low in prostration, weeping as he implored the All-Powerful and Self-Subsisting to grant him a son.

Now, at last, his prayers were to be answered.

The Holy Quran reveals that Zachariah cried to his Lord in secret: *"My Lord, weak are the bones of my body, and my head is a blaze of white hair, but in my prayers to You, my Lord, I have never been disappointed. I fear for the spiritual well-being of my kinsfolk after I am gone, and my wife is barren. Grant me of Your Grace an heir, who shall be my inheritor and the inheritor of the house of Jacob, and make him, my Lord, well pleasing to You."*

Allah Most High replied: *"O Zachariah, We give you good tidings of a boy whose name shall be John*

(Yahyā). To none before him who bear this name have We given prophetic distinction." (Q.19:3-7)

The angels greeted Zachariah with the wonderful news that his son John would be a Prophet and would herald the prophetic mission of the beloved Jesus.

The angels called to him as he stood at worship in the sanctuary: "Allah gives you good tidings of John, a Word from Allah, a noble leader, abstinent, a Prophet, one of the righteous." (Q.3:39)

The blessed Zachariah, delighted yet filled with astonishment, cried out: *My Lord, how shall I have a son, when my wife is barren and I have grown weak from old age?*

The Lord replied: *It shall be so. Your Lord says, "For Me that is easy. I created you when you were nothing."*

Said he: *My Lord, give me a sign.*

The Lord replied: *Your sign is that you shall not be able to speak to anyone for three nights.*

Then the Prophet Zachariah came forth to his people from the sanctuary and silently signified to them:

Give glory to the Lord, both morning and evening. (Q.19:8-11)

Nine months later, John, may peace be upon him, was born. He grew in stature to become a noble Prophet like his father.

To John came the Divine Command: "Take the Book with firm resolve." And We gave him wisdom even as a child, and compassion from Our Essence, and purity.

He was devoted to Allah and kind toward his parents, never overbearing or rebellious. Peace be upon him the day he was born, and the day he dies, and the day he is raised up into eternal life! (Q.19:12-15)

CHAPTER THREE

The Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Zachariah was a direct descendant of the Prophet Solomon, may peace be upon them both. As Chief Rabbi of the Israelites his duties included the interpretation of the Holy Torah and the offering of sacrifices in the Sacred Temple at Jerusalem. The Lord conferred upon him the full dignity of Prophethood.

His wife Ishā was the sister of Hanna, who was married to °Imrān, a prominent Israelite.

According to the oral traditions of Islam, °Imrān and Hanna were both descended from Israel, he as the son of Yizhar and she as the daughter of Fakuza.

Like her sister Ishā, Hanna had not been able to bear children, but she prayed to her Lord, vowing: "If You will grant me a child, I promise to dedicate him to the service of the Temple."

She evidently expected a male child, for it was the custom in those days to dedicate boys in this way. In answer to her heartfelt prayer, Hanna became pregnant, but °Imrān did not live to see the birth of his child. The baby girl was given the name Maryam, meaning the devoted or consecrated one.

Hanna was sitting at her window one day, immediately before she became pregnant, watching a baby dove

fluttering its wings as it took the food from its mother's beak.

Marveling at this demonstration of Allah's Mercy, Hanna imagined tenderly nursing her own baby. Inwardly, she pictured the infant smiling and cooing at her breast. These inspired thoughts moved Hanna to tears.

Allah Most High does not deprive the very birds and beasts of the joys of motherhood. Would He deny her that delightful experience?

In the midst of these meditations, a fervent prayer arose from the depths of her heart. Hanna pleaded with the All-Powerful and Self-Subsisting Lord, and made her vow.

°Imrān's wife cried:
Lord, I vow to You the fruit of my womb as a consecrated offering. Accept it from me. You are All-Hearing, All-Knowing. (Q.3:35)

Nine months later, Hanna was surprised when she saw that she had given birth to a girl and not to the boy she had confidently expected.

How could she keep her vow?

There was no precedent for the admission of a girl into the sacred service of the Temple.

The venerable Zachariah, her brother-in-law, told her: "A vow is a vow. You promised to dedicate your child to the Temple and that vow you must fulfill. Allah will surely accept your offering."

Hanna rejoiced to hear these wise words.

The Holy Quran relates:

When she was delivered, she said: "O my Lord, I have borne a female child, as You know best. The male is not like the female. I have named her Mary, and I commend her and her offspring to Your protection from the accursed Satan!"

Her Lord accorded Mary a noble reception, and made her grow in purity and beauty. (Q.3:36-37)

CHAPTER FOUR

The Virgin Mary is Brought to the Temple

The rabbis of the Temple were all eager to be responsible for the upbringing and training of the young Maryam, for she was radiantly beautiful, extremely gifted and delightful. Each of these learned men tried to prove why he had the strongest claim to be her protector and mentor.

There was a Temple regulation stating that children consecrated to its service should be assigned in rotation to the resident rabbis. One argued that his turn was due, another claimed seniority, while another pointed to his kinship with the venerable Maryam. A great debate ensued.

After elaborate discussion, the rabbis finally decided the matter by drawing sacred lots. Each of the proposed guardians picked a straw. It was Zachariah who received the straw marked with her name.

Such were the mysterious events through which the blessed Virgin Mary came to have a noble Prophet as her spiritual guide and teacher. This incident is alluded to in the Holy Quran, where the following words are addressed to the Prophet Muhammad, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him:

This is an account of events unseen, which We reveal to you by inspiration. You were not present with them when they were casting lots as to which of them

should be in charge of Mary. Nor were you with them when they engaged in debate. (Q.3:44)

And Zachariah became her guardian. (Q.3:37)

Alone in her private chamber in the Temple, the Virgin Mary devoted herself to the worship of her Lord.

Her guardian, the venerable Zachariah, would bring her food and drink. Since no one else ever intruded upon her solitude, he was utterly astonished to discover that the blessed Virgin had no need of the provisions that he brought.

She was always well supplied with winter fruits in summer and summer fruits in winter, as well as other rare and delicate foods.

In reality, the forms of sustenance that he discovered in her room were not bounties from this world but fruits of Paradise.

Whenever Zachariah entered the secret sanctuary where the Virgin remained, he found she already had ample provision.

He asked: *Mary, how did this come to you?*

She replied: *It is from Allah. Surely Allah provides without measure or limit for whomsoever He pleases. (Q.3:37)*

It is commonly accepted that one has to exert oneself to obtain provisions, yet Maryam received her sustenance directly from God, without working for it or even having to ask, just as she would conceive the beloved Jesus without needing a husband.

This first miracle of the Virgin, receiving her sustenance from Paradise, heralds the miraculous conception of Jesus, may peace be upon him. The words that the Virgin addressed to the venerable Zachariah, revealed by Allah in the Holy Quran, are intended for all humanity to hear. They serve to strengthen our faith in the Power and Mercy of Allah.

Numerous and marvellous are the favors of this kind, divinely bestowed upon those perfect servants who draw close to Allah in loving worship.

Those who acknowledge the Power and Mercy of Allah are the ones who benefit. Those who deny Him, deny themselves.

The Virgin Mary shared her miraculous provisions with Zachariah and with the poor. These fruits and foods were far more delicious than their earthly counterparts. They were presented to Maryam by the Angel Gabriel and possessed unusual properties.

Nourished by this heavenly communion, by the time she had reached the tender age of nine or ten, Maryam had grown and developed both physically and spiritually. Her spiritual attainment gave her the appearance of an angel.

At fifteen, the blessed Virgin had reached physical and spiritual maturity. She was ready for child-bearing and motherhood.

During constant inward remembrance and regular external worship of her Glorious Lord, this gifted young woman often experienced ecstasy. She enjoyed visions of angels and heard them glorifying Allah Most High.

On one auspicious day, around this time, the mighty Archangel appeared, bearing a wonderful Divine Message. The gracious favor of Allah to His servant, Maryam, was thus conveyed in a prophetic manner.

The angels said: O Mary, Allah has selected you and purified you. He has chosen you above all womankind. Mary, be devoted to your Lord, prostrate yourself and bow with those who bow in worship. (Q.3:42-43)

After this Divine Proclamation, the noble young woman entered an even more exalted degree of spirituality.

Her love for God became more intense, and she experienced increasing rapture in her heart, ablaze with the love of Allah. She spent her days and nights bowing and prostrating in grateful worship.

Her Lord's Name was always on her lips, and every atom of her being ceaselessly gave thanks to Him.

The venerable Zachariah was now bent over with age. He was one hundred and thirty-five years old.

The task of protecting and guiding his precious student had become a heavy burden. He could no longer discharge his duty properly. He needed to find an honorable and trustworthy believer to assume the guardianship of this enlightened young woman.

After careful reflection, Zachariah realized that he knew the very man. He entrusted the Virgin Mary to the care of Joseph the Carpenter, who was also a relative of hers. Joseph was overjoyed to accept this sacred responsibility, as he too was dedicated by vow to the service of the Temple.

Joseph was wise, learned and devout. He supported himself by the work of his own hands and used his honest earnings to help the poor.

This holy person had the honor of looking after the Virgin Mary during the last days of the blessed Zachariah's life and after his martyrdom.

Throughout this time, Joseph the Carpenter served Maryam faithfully, ensuring that her every need was met. He comforted her in days of pain and sorrow. He was never far from her side.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Conception of the Beloved Jesus

After the blessed Maryam reached puberty, she would stay at the home of her aunt during her menstrual cycle. Before returning to the Temple to continue her service, it was her custom to walk unaccompanied as far as the date groves that lay to the east beyond the Temple walls.

This provided her with a change of air and the opportunity to wash in the clear stream that ran through the groves.

She knew of a secluded area behind a natural screen of tall grass and rushes, where women could bathe privately.

One day, as she was bathing in these waters that flowed from a sacred spring, the blessed Virgin was startled by the sudden appearance of a very handsome young man. He was smiling at her.

She immediately covered herself and in a gentle voice begged him to depart without causing her any harm.

But this was not any ordinary mortal being. It was the Archangel Gabriel, may peace be upon him, who had assumed human form.

He spoke with beautiful tones.

"I have not come to harm you. I am an envoy sent to you by Allah. I bring the good tidings that He is soon to give you a male child, untouched by sinfulness and error."

The Virgin Mary was shocked.

She replied: "How can that be? I have never married nor has any man known me. I shall always preserve my virginity, for I am consecrated to the Temple by my parents' vow. Those so consecrated can never marry, and must remain virgins."

The Divine Envoy confirmed the veracity of her words.

"Yes, all that you say is true. Nevertheless, what I have told you is ordained by Allah.

It is His Will that you become the mother of a male child, virgin though you be.

This child will be created by a miracle and will be a sign to the entire world. He will be a mercy to those who believe that Allah is capable of all things.

Allah can easily create a child without a father. This He has now commanded, and what He wills must surely come to pass."

Without touching the blessed Maryam, angel Gabriel blew upon her from afar, and through that breath she became pregnant.

This is revealed in the Holy Quran:

Make mention, in the Noble Book, of Mary, when she withdrew from her people to an eastern place,

choosing seclusion from them. Then We sent to her Our Holy Spirit, and it assumed for her the form of a perfect man.

She said: "I take refuge with the All-Merciful from you, if you are not righteous."

Gabriel replied: "I am only a messenger of your Lord, sent to announce the gift of a faultless son."

She asked: "How shall I have a son, when no man has touched me, and I am not unchaste?"

Gabriel replied: "Your Lord has proclaimed: *For Me it is easy, and We shall make him a sign to humanity, and a mercy from Us. It is a thing ordained." (Q.19:16-21)*

Allah Most High offers the Virgin Mary as a powerful example to all those who are faithful, throughout human history.

Mary, ʿImrān's daughter, guarded her virginity, and so We breathed Our Spirit into her; and she testified to the truth of the words of her Lord and His scriptures, and she was one of those who are devout. (Q.66:12)

We breathed Our Spirit into her, and made her and her son a sign for all mankind. (Q.21:91)

We should meditate on the meaning of breath and spirit.

Spirit is the essence of life, the very Divine Power upon which all life depends. Before any being can be breathed upon by Spirit, it must be in the right condition to receive the holy breath.

For instance, the glass must be at the proper

temperature if it is to be blown into the shape of a bottle.

To become a mother in the fullest sense, a young woman must reach the appropriate stage of physical and spiritual maturity. The blessed Virgin was now at that stage.

It was to awaken her vocation for child-bearing that the Envoy Gabriel, upon him be peace, was sent to her in the guise of a handsome young man. The angels themselves are neither male nor female and are strangers to sexual passion.

Beholding the Envoy in the form of a handsome youth, and hearing his tender voice as he told her the purpose of his mission, the Virgin Mary reached a state of perfect readiness to receive the Holy Spirit, and thus she became pregnant.

This would not have occurred if the Archangel had appeared in his own transcendental form. Although He is Omnipotent, Allah chose partially to preserve the customary pattern of cause and effect.

In describing the miraculous creation of our first father, the blessed Adam, the Holy Quran explains how the clay was molded and shaped and made ready to receive the breath of Divine Life.

Your Lord said to the angels: "Look, I am about to create a human being from clay, from molded mud. When I have shaped him and breathed My Spirit into him, fall down before him in prostration!"
(Q.15:28-29)

Just as humanity originated with the Holy Spirit blown into Adam, so shall Divine Breath blown through a trumpet be the signal for the universal Resurrection.

In Sūra Yā-Sīn, the heart of the Holy Quran, we read:

And there shall be a blast upon the trumpet. Then see them rush forth from their tombs to their Lord.

"Alas for us!" they cry. "Who roused us from our resting place?"

This is what the All-Merciful One promised, and truthful were the Messengers. There shall be but a single trumpet blast. They will all be arraigned before Us! (Q.36:51-53)

By the blowing of a Divine Breath, the beloved Jesus was created in the Virgin Mary's womb. Allah possesses all Power. He originally created the whole human kingdom with a single breath. He will withdraw that kingdom with a single breath. And He will recreate with a single breath this entire universe, the whole of humanity and every living creature, on the level of Paradise.

The likeness of Jesus in the sight of Allah is as that of Adam. He created him from dust, saying to him, 'Be!', and he came into being. (Q.3:59)

In other words:
"The fatherless creation of Jesus resembles that of Adam, whom We created from the dust with neither mother nor father. Just as We breathed Our Spirit into Adam and said, *Be!*, so did We breathe Our Spirit into Jesus.

We said to him *Be born!*, and he came to birth."

In this glorious verse, Allah is proclaiming:
"I am capable of all things. Just as I created this visible universe and all the invisible worlds with the single

command, *Be!*, and just as I created Adam with neither mother nor father, and Eve spontaneously, so have I created Jesus with a mother but no father.

O Children of Israel, you who are people of the Book and who follow my Prophet Moses, when I have created the exalted angels with neither mothers nor fathers, how can you think it impossible for Me to create Jesus without a father?"

Those who assert that the fatherless creation of Jesus is evidence of his being the literal son of God should consider the creation of Adam, for it is even more dramatic than that of Jesus. Jesus had a mother, but Adam had neither mother nor father.

To those who have called Jesus the literal son of God we ask: "What is your opinion of the miraculous birth of Adam, which is superior by one degree to that of Jesus?"

The exalted angels who carry the Divine Throne, Gabriel, Michael, Isrāfīl and Azrā'īl, and all the other angelic beings whom only Allah Most High can number, all of these were created with neither mother nor father. All the marvelous cosmic and spiritual phenomena, have they not come into being simply through God's command, *Be!*?

You who aspire to have faith in God and to love Him, just as He can with equal ease create a galaxy or a microbe invisible to the naked eye, so with equal ease can He create a human being with parents or without.

If Allah Most High wills that you or I experience faith, at that moment our idle minds, which usually neglect to contemplate His Infinite Power, will immediately be ignited. We shall at once be crowned with the diadem of faith.

The eyes of our hearts will be blessed with insight and imbued with conscience. We shall be free of every uncertainty, suspicion and doubt, and shall attain to perfect peace and faithfulness. If He wishes, He endows His chosen servant with certitude and sincerity.

But you will not believe, except as Allah wills;
Allah is indeed All-Knowing, All-Wise. (Q.76:30)

The Holy Quran reveals the miraculous birth of Jesus, may peace be upon him. The Glorious Quran speaks of further miracles made manifest by Divine Mercy through the hands of the beloved Jesus. These abundant miracles bear witness to the special nature of his birth, enlightening the faithful and ever increasing their faith.

And He will make him a Messenger to the Children of Israel. Jesus will proclaim:
"I have come to you with signs from your Lord.
See how I fashion for you out of clay the likeness of a bird. Then I breathe into it and it does become a bird, by Allah's leave.
I heal those blind from birth, and the lepers, and I bring the dead to life, by Allah's leave.
I inform you of what you eat and what you keep stored in your houses.
Surely in that there is a sign for you, if only you are faithful." (Q.3:49)

Here we have further evidence that the beloved Jesus was conceived and brought to life by the breath of the Spirit, for he had only to blow his own breath into a clay bird, and Allah gave it life.

Life is introduced by Divine Command through the breathing of the Holy Spirit.

Of the quadrillions of events taking place in the universe yesterday, today and tomorrow, during an hour, a minute, or merely an instant, the vast majority undoubtedly occur within the divinely established laws of nature.

Nevertheless, we are obliged to admit that many occurrences, which we may describe as fortuitous, cannot be accounted for within this accustomed framework.

When contemplating Allah's miracles, we should remember that even today, in our advanced contemporary civilization, the ratio of what is known by man to what is still unknown is less than one to a million.

For everyone who knows, there is always someone who knows more.

Let us never forget the wise saying:
"Every master has a master of his own, hand over hand, up to the Divine Throne."

At the End of Time, all creatures will perish at the first blast on the Trumpet, and will be resurrected at the second blast. The second blast is the consequence of the first, which is therefore the indirect cause of the Resurrection. Thus, death is the cause of life, for death marks the beginning of a second, everlasting life.

According to an oral tradition of the prince of Prophets, the beloved Muhammad, may peace and blessings be upon him:

"All human beings are asleep. They awake only when they die."

Sleep is a dimension of death. Lovers of Truth and faithful servants of Allah do not die. They attain true life in the realm of Ultimate Reality. It is only the animal self which dies. The human soul never dies.

CHAPTER SIX

The Birth of the Beloved Jesus

The time had now come for the Virgin Mary to give birth to Jesus the Messiah.

Allah Most High sent Gabriel to communicate this message to her: "Mary, the Temple is a place sanctified solely for the worship of My Divine Essence. You must come forth to give birth to your child."

In obedience to this command, the blessed Virgin left the Temple and went to the home of her aunt, Ishā, the wife of the venerable Zachariah. Ishā greeted her niece with great joy, giving Mary the good news of her own unexpected pregnancy.

"Do you realize that I am also with child?" asked Maryam.

"Look," replied Ishā, "the babe in my womb is bowing to the babe in yours!"

The humble prostration made by the unborn John toward the unborn Messiah, Jesus, was a salutation of reverence not an act of worship. Prostration in worship is due solely to the Lord of the Worlds. John's prenatal act of devotion was in recognition of the Prophethood of the beloved Jesus and in honor of his mission of the Divine Word.

The venerable John is described in the Holy Quran as

the one who will witness the truth of a Word from Allah. (Q. 3 : 39)

Ishā said to her illumined niece:
"O Mary, the movement of exultation I felt in my womb has made me realize that you are carrying a great being, miraculously conceived. But ordinary people, including our own families, will fail to appreciate this mystery. They will consider you a disgrace and will lay a burden of guilt upon you and your child, accusing you of treacherous deceit. Do not have your baby here, but look for a place outside the city to give birth."

This hostility did arise, when the blessed Virgin's condition eventually became obvious, and people began saying:

"How could this happen to you? Are you not the sister of the saintly Aaron and the daughter of that perfected man, °Imrān? Are you not the daughter of Hanna, the epitome of spiritual virtue?"

Mary would not answer these painful questions in words. Instead, she placed her right hand on her forehead, then lowered it to her abdomen before touching first her right shoulder and then her left, in the gesture of mystic sealing. This original sign of the cross signified her silent statement, as her uncle, Prophet Zachariah, had once signaled silently to the people:

"The babe in my womb is part of the destiny written on my forehead. The recording angels on my right and left bear witness to this, as does Allah Most High."

This is how the venerable al-Kalbī, an enlightened Islamic historian, relates the event.

People proclaimed to Mary's cousin, Joseph the Carpenter:

"Have you heard the news? Mary has been accused of being unchaste, as a result of which she is pregnant. If this should reach the ears of our high priest, he must condemn her to death by stoning."

Because he was a relative of the Virgin Mary, Joseph of Canaan had been appointed her guardian by the venerable Zachariah. He was astonished to hear such reports, for he never left her unattended. How could Maryam, the very soul of purity, have committed any sinful offense?

Once convinced that the charge was true, he was prepared to allow the religious authorities to bring her to trial. However an angel appeared before him in human form.

Declaring his angelic identity, this radiant being informed Joseph:

"Beware of making a dreadful mistake. Her pregnancy is a miracle from the Holy Spirit. She is a chaste and perfectly virtuous woman. Whoever does her any harm will face eternal damnation."

After hearing these inspired words, Joseph placed the blessed virgin Mary on a donkey and took her out of the land of Palestine into the land of Egypt. He thereby saved her from death by stoning, for the uncompromising religious law of the Torah was not enforced in Egypt.

According to another oral tradition, as the days went by, the young woman's condition became unmistakably apparent to Joseph as they served

together in the Temple. He was at a loss to understand how this pregnancy could have occurred.

"How can I suspect Maryam of having sinned, when she is so ceaselessly worshipful and obedient to Allah, so steeped in the fear and love of Allah?

No, no, that cannot be. She is quite innocent.

I witness her spending all day and night in the meditation and the service of God, Exalted is He. She is always beside me, serving the Lord of the Worlds."

Indeed, no one in those days could compare with Joseph and Maryam in devotion and nearness to the Creator of the Universe.

The noble Joseph was desperately concerned. He was certain of her innocence, yet it was as clear as the light of day that she was pregnant. What could the explanation be?

At length, he approached Maryam and humbly said:

"O blessed Virgin, I am distressed by your condition. I have never felt so sad.

I did not want to say anything, but now I feel compelled to ask you. How did this happen? Has there been a harvest without seed being sown?"

Maryam said that it was so.

"Has a tree sprouted without being watered?"

Again, she quietly assented.

When Joseph asked, "Has a child come into being

without a father?", the blessed Virgin replied: "When Allah, Exalted is He, created the first harvest, did that harvest grow from seed? Have you not considered that Allah first created the trees with the command, *Be!*, and only then made water their source of life? It was after the creation of the harvest that seed was created.

O Joseph, consider carefully. Your inquiry is a subtle denial of Allah's Power.

Could the absence of water prevent Allah from creating trees? In the absence of seed, would He have lacked the Power to bring forth the harvest?

In fact, the exalted Creator, Who brought forth trees when there was no water and harvest without seed, is also responsible for the fatherless creation of the child I now carry in my womb."

Joseph perceived how profoundly the Virgin Mary had spoken. He agreed with what she had implied and raised no further question. He continued loyally at her side, in the sacred service of the Temple, witnessing with awe the unfolding of her destiny.

Inspired biographers and historians hold diverse views concerning the duration of the Virgin Mother's pregnancy. Some say she carried the child for the normal term of nine months and ten days, while others maintain that she gave birth after eight months.

There are those who assert that the period of gestation was six months, or even no more than three hours. It has been suggested that the time between conception and delivery was hardly one hour, on the grounds that Allah, Exalted is He, mentions no interval between these two events in His Holy Quran.

So she conceived him and retired with him to a remote place. (Q.19:22)

One conservative commentator writes:
"We may understand from this Quranic Verse that the blessed Virgin conceived Jesus at the spot where she bathed, an hour's distance from the city, that he was created and formed inside his mother's womb within that very hour, and that she gave birth to him at noon that very day."

He adds: "At the time she gave birth to the beloved Jesus, the Virgin Mary was just fifteen years of age. She had menstruated only twice."

The blessed Virgin did not know what to do when she felt the onset of her labor. She decided to seek out a place where she would not be witnessed. She left Jerusalem and walked until she reached an area surrounded by date palms. To ease the pressure of her contractions, she rested her back against the trunk of a palm tree.

There was no couch or cushion, not even a piece of cloth with which to receive the coming baby. Her blessed eyes glanced at the fallen leaves of that date palm, and she heard a divine voice:

"Gather the fronds and spread them on the ground to make yourself a couch."

Maryam humbly obeyed this holy command. The simple, natural bed was prepared, and soon the awaited guest arrived to honor this world. While the beloved Jesus was being delivered, angels came, rank upon rank, and surrounded the date palm, proclaiming the Greatness of Allah.

Thirsty after the efforts of birthgiving, the blessed Maryam looked about for some water, the life-sustaining element. She needed to replenish her vital energy by drinking, and also to wash the luminous baby that had just been born. Her feelings were in turmoil, as amazement and dread alternated with maternal tenderness and compassion.

She was filled with love for her newborn baby, yet anxiety arose within her beautiful heart as she wondered what she would say in defense of her honor and virtue when people saw the holy child.

Deeply troubled, she sighed:

If only I had died before this,
and been forgotten altogether. (Q.19:23)

But Allah Most High had not forgotten her.

A voice cried out near her, saying: "Do not grieve! Your Lord has placed a rivulet beside you. Shake the trunk of the palm tree, and you will cause ripe dates to fall." (Q.19:24-25)

Some Quranic scholars consider that the voice Maryam heard was that of the Angel Gabriel, but others believe it was the baby Jesus himself, miraculously addressing his Mother, by Allah's Command, at the very moment of his blessed birth.

This miracle of a new-born child speaking was without precedent in the history of humanity, and it would not be repeated until the birth of our glorious Messenger, the Beloved of Allah.

The moment he left his mother's womb, the noble Prophet Muhammad prostrated in worship, praying for the well-being of his future spiritual community to the Lord of the Worlds.

This miraculous event was reported by our Master's revered mother, the blessed Āmina. In his *Mevlid-i Sherif,* the venerable mystic poet Suleyman Chelebi portrays the event through the eyes of Amina:

"Turning, the blessed mother Amina discovered the babe, who was the Welfare of all Mankind, deep in worship, facing the direction of the Holy Kaaba, in the position of full prostration. He then sat back and intoned the prayer of witness to Divine Unity, *ashhadu an la ilaha illa llah,* pointing with the first finger of his small right hand. The babe then cried aloud to Allah in heart-melting tones: '*Ya Allah.* I turn to You and You alone. Bring me my spiritual community. Let them all achieve blessed nearness to You'."

We should not find such miracles incredible. Allah All-Powerful caused an insect to speak to the Prophet Solomon in the Valley of the Ants. On the coming Day of Resurrection, He will cause our hands to testify to their actions while our lips remain sealed. If He so wills, Allah is surely able to give the power of speech to an infant.

Our limited intellect is unable to comprehend the creation of the Prophets and the miracles bestowed upon them. Receptivity to such marvellous manifestations is more fruitful for us than denial.

The infant Jesus did not speak of his own will, but by the inspiration of Allah, Who is capable of all things. Allah Most High brought consolation to the distressed Virgin Mother by causing the infant to address her.

In essence, her Lord was saying:

"O blessed Mother Mary, do not despair. Your exalted Lord has made this child a great Prophet and a noble leader. Look, Your Lord has caused a clear, sweet

stream to flow. Drink of that water, and wash your baby and yourself therein. Shake the palm tree and it will yield fresh dates."

Allah continued speaking to the heart of the Virgin:
So eat and drink and be comforted. And if you catch sight of any mortal, say: "I have vowed a fast to the All-Merciful, so I may not speak to any human being." (Q.19:26)

This sweet stream which the All-Powerful and Self-Subsisting Reality had caused to flow where no water had flowed before was not an earthly stream. It ran cold when the blessed Virgin wished to drink, but became warm when she wanted to bathe and wash her little son.

According to the venerable Ibn Abbās, this rivulet sprang forth from a spot where Jesus had tapped his foot, just as the holy spring Zamzam appeared when the baby Ishmael, upon him be peace, struck his heel on the ground where the sanctuary of Mecca now stands.

As soon as the Virgin Mary had given birth to the baby Jesus, the winter palm tree became green again and bore fruit for her consolation, just as Allah Most High had supplied Maryam with winter fruits in summer and summer fruits in winter, when she was devoting herself to solitary worship in a chamber accessible to no one but Prophet Zachariah, upon him be peace.

Allah alone is All-Capable and All-Powerful.

These miracles were sent to relieve the Virgin Mother of the anxiety and sorrow she felt on contemplating the slander she would have to endure.

She was clearly told: "Do not grieve! Do not answer those faithless ones who deny the power of Allah. Signal to them that you are fasting from conversation today. Eat and drink in joy and do not be concerned. The ignorant cannot receive your explanation."

Truly, it is better to turn away with dignity from foolishness and ignorance.

The blessed Mother was greatly cheered by obeying these Divine Commands. She nursed her baby Jesus, who conversed with her in fluent speech. Joseph the Carpenter arrived to find that his beloved ward had given birth. He set about gathering wood, and kindled a fire to keep the Virgin warm. He then took seven walnuts from his pocket, cracked them, and gave them to her to eat.

"When I was pregnant with Jesus," reminisced the blessed Virgin, "I used to hear him glorifying Allah from within my womb. Whenever someone greeted me, I would hear Jesus returning the salutation from inside."

The following Oral Tradition has been handed down from the Prince of Prophets, the blessed Muhammad Mustafa:

"Whenever a human being is born, Satan prods the baby with his finger. But the devil could find no way of doing this to Mary's miraculous son. Allah protected Jesus from this distorting touch."

On the day following the Virgin Birth, false idols all over the world were seen to have fallen prostrate.

The birth of Jesus caused Satan much distress.

The Messiah Jesus would also give the tidings to humanity and to the beings on subtle planes of the coming of the Prince of the Universe, the beloved Prophet Muhammad.

The Glorious Quran reveals these words of the beloved Jesus:

"O Children of Holy Israel, I am Allah's Messenger to you, confirming the Holy Torah before me, and bringing good tidings of a Messenger who will come after me, whose name is Ahmad, which means highly praised."

But when Jesus came to them with clear Divine Signs, they said: "This is mere sorcery." (Q.61:6)

Jesus, upon him be peace, had given the People of Israel the good news that our Master Muhammad would come as a mercy to all the worlds, and yet, when he finally did arrive, they accused him of sorcery, dismissing the Holy Quran and his blessed miracles as mere imagination and magic.

Satan and his forces of negation were terrified when false idols toppled over after the birth of Jesus. They were at a loss to understand. All the demons gathered to consult Satan, whom they found seated on a throne floating on the water.

"What has happened?" he asked them. "What is the reason for this panic?"

With a single voice, they replied: "This morning we found all our false idols lying toppled on their faces. We fear that human beings may no longer worship them. We have come to seek your advice, since we do not know the cause and significance of this."

Satan told them:

"I as well know nothing about these events, so you must wait patiently while I investigate what has been happening in the universe. I shall inform you as soon as I know."

Instantly, he flew from his strange throne. Upon reaching the place where the beloved Jesus had been born and finding the holy angels there, lost in adoration, Satan realized that he had discovered the cause. When the angels saw Satan, they barred his way and drove him from the place of sacred nativity.

Thus Allah, Glorious is His Majesty, protected Jesus from Satan's mischief. It was to this our blessed Master referred, in the oral tradition cited above.

When Satan returned to his demonic accomplices, he reported:
"The collapse of the false idols seems to have been caused by the birth of the Prophet Jesus. I am usually informed when a woman is pregnant, but I had no news of this child's birth."

Then he added:

"Very few of the Prophets that we have previously opposed have been gifted with such miraculous powers as Jesus. The reason I had no prior knowledge was that the Messiah Jesus was created through the breath of Gabriel the Trustworthy. I cannot go where the Archangel Gabriel is present.

But do not be dismayed. We shall take advantage of the fact that this child was conceived without a father. We shall mislead many of his future followers into believing that, since he has no mortal father, Jesus must be the literal son of God."

Those who love the noble Jesus should be aware that two groups of people are led astray because of malicious distortions spread by Satan.

The first group consists of those who love the Messiah Jesus intensely, but who attribute Absolute Divinity to him and deny his human nature. They hold the polytheistic belief that Jesus is merely a second Deity, and they lose the blessing of his perfect humanity.

The second group is made up of those who deny the authentic Prophethood of Jesus. They regard him as an illegitimate child, and falsely impute to his holy mother the sins of both adultery and fabrication. The denial engaged in by both these groups shall not prevail over the Truth.

Muslims believe that the beloved Jesus is a supreme prophetic soul, who was uniquely manifested by the Power of Allah to express the very Spirit of God. Muslims believe that Jesus only appeared to be crucified, for it is written in the Holy Quran:

They neither killed him nor crucified him, though it appeared so to them ... Allah raised him up unto Himself. (Q.4:157-158)

Both Muslims and Christians accept the bodily ascension of Jesus into Paradise and both await his miraculous return to the earth. Allah revealed to the noble Prophet Muhammad a total of more than one hundred Quranic verses extolling and venerating Jesus and his Virgin Mother.

Two entire Surahs of the Glorious Quran are largely devoted to them, namely *Sūra Maryam* (Chapter 19) and *Sūrat as-Saff* (Chapter 61). The second of these is sometimes called *Sura Īsā,* the Chapter of Jesus.

The verses of the Holy Quran are addressed to those who are in awe of Allah, who worship, obey and love the One God, who acknowledge the noble Muhammad, and all the Prophets who came before him, including the sacred scriptures revealed to them, and who share their sustenance with the poor. We are assured that salvation and success in both worlds are attained by such faithful persons.

Upon inwardly receiving news of the birth of the beloved Jesus, a company of wise sages set out from their homeland to pay respects to the holy child. On the way to Bethlehem, their caravan attracted the attention of the ruler of Syria, who inquired about their destination.

"The Messiah has come into the world," they told him. "A miraculous star has appeared in the sky to guide us, and we are bearing gifts to the holy child."

"What manner of gifts do you bear?" asked the tyrant.

"Gold, bezoar and myrrh are the most important symbolic gifts we carry," they replied.

When asked why they considered these three offerings to be appropriate for the Messiah, they explained:

"Gold is the master of all worldly powers, and the Messiah Jesus is the Master of this age.

Bezoar is a remedy for every wound, the antidote for every disease. The Messenger who has just been born will be a healing remedy to many who are sick and suffering.

By Divine Permission, he will cause the blind to see, heal lepers and restore the dead to life.

As for myrrh, its perfume rises heavenward and attracts the angelic host. This is also symbolic, for the people will seek to kill Jesus, and the exalted Lord will raise him to heaven, just as the scent of myrrh rises."

The ruler of Syria became madly envious when he heard this account. He resolved to make a martyr of the beloved Jesus.

"Let me know his whereabouts when you find him," he told the wise men, "so that I may also send him appropriate offerings."

The caravan continued on its way until they reached the Virgin Mary and presented their gifts. The infant Messiah addressed them, saying:

"If you meet the ruler of Syria again, do not tell him where I am. He envies me and intends to make me a martyr."

On their homeward journey, the caravan avoided the Syrian domain.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Virgin Mother's Return to Her People

For forty days following the holy birthgiving, the noble Joseph hid his cousin Maryam in a cave. Then they rejoined her family. The baby Jesus spoke to his mother along the way.

"O blessed mother, receive the good tidings that I am servant and Messiah of the exalted Lord. Feel no sorrow or dismay."

When they arrived, however, Mary's relatives were distressed to see her holding her baby to her breast.

The Holy Quran relates:

Then she brought him to her people, carrying him in her arms.

They said: "O Mary, you have performed an unforgivable action! O sister of Aaron, your father was not an immoral man, nor was your mother unchaste."

She indicated that they should question the beloved Jesus.

They said: "How can we talk to him who is but an infant in the cradle?"

Jesus replied: "I am indeed a servant of Allah. He has given me Revelation and appointed me His Prophet.

He has made me blessed wherever I may be, and has ordained me to pray and to serve as long as I live.

He has made me kind to my mother, and has not made me arrogant or rebellious.

Peace is upon me, the day I was born, the day I die, and the day I shall ascend to Paradise."

Such was Jesus, son of Mary. This is a clear statement of the truth about which they argue. (Q.19:27-34)

A careful reading of these Quranic verses will show that the beloved Jesus said to his people: "I am the servant of Allah." He did not affirm: "I am the literal son of Allah."

Muslims recognize Jesus, upon him be peace, as the sublime servant of God and as one of His Divine Messengers. Knowing Jesus to have been created without a father, they call him *Rūhullāh*, the Spirit of God.

Christian believers have reason to feel gratitude for the venerable Muhammad Mustafa, even if they cannot bring themselves to accept him as their Prophet, for he has implanted great love in millions of hearts for both the Virgin Mary and her son, Jesus the Messiah.

The essential message of all the Prophets has been the same:

Lā ilāha illa-llāh
There is nothing worthy of worship except the One God.

We therefore mention each Prophet with the single Affirmation of Divine Unity.

Lā ilāha illa-llāh Ādam Safiyu-llāh
The One God alone is worthy of worship,
and Adam is the Friend of Allah

Lā ilāha illa-llāh Nūh Najiu-llāh
The One God alone is worthy of worship,
and Noah is the Confidant of Allah

Lā ilāha illa-llāh Ibrāhīm Khalilu-llāh
The One God alone is worthy of worship,
and Abraham is the Intimate Friend of Allah

Lā ilāha illa-llāh Dāwud Khalifatu-llāh
The One God alone is worthy of worship,
and David is the Representative of Allah

Lā ilāha illa-llāh Mūsā Kalimu-llāh
The One God alone is worthy of worship,
and Moses is the One who Conversed with Allah

Lā ilāha illa-llāh ʿIsā Rūhu-llāh
The One God alone is worthy of worship,
and Jesus is the Spirit of Allah

Lā ilāha illa-llāh Jumlatul-anbiyāi Nabiyu-llāh
The One God alone is worthy of worship,
and every Prophet is the Prophet of Allah

Lā ilāha illa-llāh,
Muhammad Rasūlu-llāh
wa-Habībullāh Khātamun-Nabiyīn,
Sayyidul-Mursalīn, Rasūluth-Thaqalayn,
Khātamul-Mursalīn

Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, the Beloved of Allah, the Seal of the Prophets, the Chief of the

Messengers, the Messenger to Men and Jinn, the Seal of the Messengers.

Salawātu-llāhi °alayhim ajma°in
May the blessings of Allah be upon them all.

The blessed Virgin came from a family renowned for its virtue and honor, for its purity and devotion.

In the Holy Quran, she is addressed as Sister of Aaron. This Aaron is not the brother of the venerable Moses, but an intimate friend of God revered for his righteousness and sanctity among the Children of Israel.

Maryam's father, °Imrān, is referred to in the Holy Quran as an honorable and well-respected man, and her mother, the noble Hanna, was also an example of purity and virtue.

Raised in such a family, we can understand the Quranic account of the shocked reception, when Maryam suddenly appeared among her people as an unwed mother, with a baby in her arms.

According to the historian, Imrān ibn Maymūn, Mary's neighbors seized her and brought her before the religious court of judgement.

They were prepared to have her stoned, but when they found that the infant Jesus could speak, they immediately withdrew their demand for punishment. No longer daring to insult her, they withdrew and left her alone.

Other scholars maintain that the Virgin Mother was taken by her cousin and protector, Joseph the Carpenter, to a region of Egypt called Rabwa.

And We made the son of Mary and his mother
a blessed sign.
And We gave them shelter in Rabwa,
a place secure and watered by springs. (Q.23:50)

Oral Tradition indicates that Mary spent two years in Egypt, where she supported herself and her little son by the sweat of her brow, spinning flax and working in the fields at harvest time. Beneath the scorching sun, she cradled her precious child in one arm, while gathering and stacking sheaves.

Apart from Egypt, our sources mention various other places in which holy mother and child may have taken refuge:

The city of Damascus, on the respected authority of °Abd as-Salām, may Allah be pleased with him, a noble Companion of the beloved Prophet Muhammad, who had been a famous Jewish scholar before he embraced Islam.

The city of Ramla, on the authority of Abu Hurayra, another of the blessed Companions.

The holy land of Arabia, according to Qatāda and Ka°b, may Allah be pleased with them both.

The knowledgeable Sa°id al-Khudri chronicles the early schooling of the beloved Jesus. When the Virgin Mother realized that the time had come for her son to learn to read and write, she took the boy by the hand and led him to school, where she left him in the care of a religious teacher.

The teacher began his first lesson by instructing Jesus how to say:

Bismi-llāhi-r-rahmāni-r-rahim
In the Name of God, All-Merciful and Compassionate

When the beautiful and precocious child asked him the secret meaning of *Bismillāh*, the teacher confessed that he did not know. The child calmly explained:

"The letter B stands for *Bahā'ullāh*, the Splendid Beauty of Allah; the S is for *Sanā'ullāh*, the Sublime Majesty of Allah; and the M stands for *Mulku-llāh*, the Sovereign Might of Allah."

The teacher then asked his extraordinary pupil to recite the alphabet. The beloved Jesus responded by asking him if he knew the secret meaning of the letters. The enraged teacher was about to strike Jesus with his stick, when the child said:

"Wait! First ask me if I know the meaning of the alphabet. You can thrash me if I cannot give the proper answer."

The astonished teacher invited him to give his interpretation of *abjad*, which are the first four letters, corresponding to ABCD in English.

The noble Jesus explained:
"The *alif* stands for *Ala'ullāh*, the Gracious Favors of Allah; the *bā'* is for *Bahā'ullāh*, the Splendid Beauty of Allah; *jim* is for *Jalālullāh*, the Majesty of Allah; and *dāl* is for *Dīnullāh*, the Religion of Allah."

"Please continue!", the teacher cried in amazement. The prophetic child proceeded through the entire alphabet.

"As for the *hā'* in *hawwaz*, that stands for *hāwiya*, one of the depths of hell; *wāw* is for *wayl*, meaning woe, as in *Woe to the denizens of hell!*; *zāy* is for *zafir*, the

roar of the flames of hellfire. The group *hutti* signifies that *sins are remitted for those who repent and seek Allah's forgiveness.*

The group *kalaman* refers to the uncreated and unchangeable character of the Speech of Allah:

Kalāmullāhi ghayru makhlūqin
la mubaddila li-kalimātih.

The speech of Allah is not created,
His words are unchangeable.

The group *sa'fas* is shorthand for an expression meaning, *every action in this world will be rewarded or punished in the Hereafter.*

The significance of *qarashat* is that on the Day of Resurrection, those whose thoughts and actions draw them to Hell will be chastened by its fire."

The teacher was dumbfounded by this profound commentary from the lips of a child. He sent for the Virgin Mary and said:

"Take this son of yours, for he has no need of any instruction that I might give. This boy has studied in God's mystical school. What could he learn from any earthly teacher?"

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary

> *The angels said:*
> *O Mary, Allah gives you good tidings of a Word from Him. His name shall be Messiah Jesus, the son of Mary, revered in this world and the Hereafter, and one of those nearest to Allah. (Q.3:45)*

In a brief and humble treatise like this, one cannot possibly do justice to the blessed Virgin Mary, that perfectly holy being, sanctified by Divine Grace and honored with Divine Revelation.

She and her beloved son, Jesus, have met with rejection among various peoples. However, Muslims of every race and color - including Turks, Persians, Afghans, Indians, Pakistanis, Indonesians, Albanians, Arabs and Nigerians - have nothing but love and respect for this sanctified woman, as do Christians in all parts of the world - Spaniards, Frenchmen, Italians, Germans, Czechs, English, Americans, Dutch, Swedes, Swiss, Norwegians, Greeks, Bulgarians, Rumanians, Hungarians, Serbs and Russians. May these two groups of lovers come to love one another.

The Children of Israel believe in the miracle by which the staff of the beloved Moses became a serpent.

They accept the fact that his blessed hand became radiant with light, and they believe that the waters of

the Red Sea parted when the Prophet struck them with his holy staff, thus delivering his people from the tyranny of Pharaoh.

Besides the miracles manifested by the noble Moses, the Children of Israel also acknowledge those demonstrated through many other Prophets. Is it not strange that some should deny the Prophethood of Jesus, who brought them such honor and who will do so eternally?

As Muslims, we believe in the miraculous birth and the sublime spirituality of Jesus. The Holy Quran bears witness to the sanctity of Maryam as the blessed recipient of Divine Revelation and as the Virgin Mother of the great Prophet whom she conceived and bore through the Power of Allah alone.

The Holy Quran glorifies her name by always linking it with the name of her beloved son, who is called *ʿĪsā-bnu Maryam*, Jesus the son of Mary.

In the Islamic funeral service, the deceased is named with a matronymic, as a mark of respect for the beloved Jesus. Out of reverence for him, souls will be addressed by their matronymic when they are called to account on the Day of Resurrection.

As a further sign of respect for the exalted station of the beloved Jesus, we shall be resurrected in spiritual bodies appearing essentially as we did at the age of thirty-three, that is, at the age when Jesus himself left the lower world.

Those faithful to Allah and to all His Messengers express their gratitude, affection and respect for the blessed Virgin by bestowing her sanctified name, Maryam, upon their daughters. Her pregnancy through

the breath of the Holy Spirit, and the exalted miracle of the manner in which she gave birth to the Messiah, is perceived by people of faith everywhere as a wondrous sign of Divine Mercy.

Honored is her noble name and venerated is her noble person. Her radiant spiritual abode is in the enlightened hearts of all who believe in Allah Most High. She is a living saint. As one of the holy friends of Allah, she is not dead, but has entered the realm of eternal being.

Here we have humbly attempted to offer at least one small bud from a vast rose garden, by conveying the fragrant essence of the Virgin Mary as described in the Glorious Quran and the Oral Tradition of Islam.

May we derive eternal pleasure from the sublime Guidance of Allah streaming through all the Prophets, and may we be included among His righteous servants. Let us utter *amen,* in honor of the Prince of the Messengers, Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him.

CHAPTER NINE

The Virgin Mary's Tomb

According to some Islamic sources, when Mary passed away from this world, her blessed form was buried on the Mount of Olives. Certain European sources state that the Virgin died at Ephesus.

The beloved Muhammad is the only Prophet whose earthly resting place is known absolutely for certain. The form of the noble Messenger of Allah lies beneath the green dome in Medina, while he lives in the spiritual world and intimately witnesses the condition of his community.

Allah Most Merciful will surely reward His servants who visit Ephesus in the sincere belief that they are paying their respects at the tomb of the Virgin Mary, for in Islam, as the noble Messenger has told us, actions derive their value from intention.

If our forefathers had not been somewhat uncertain about the site, they would have considered it their duty to erect a mosque at Ephesus, bearing Mary's blessed name.

In the light of the exalted station accorded her in the Holy Quran, it would be most appropriate for benevolent Muslims of the present generation to build the Mosque of Mary at Ephesus, where both sincere Christians and Muslims continue to venerate her.

In the contemporary world, humanity is divided into two camps: those who believe in God and the Day of Resurrection, be they Jews, Christians, Muslims or those of other noble traditions, and, in the other camp, the materialists and atheists.

As Muslims, we wholeheartedly accept all the Prophets who preceded our blessed Master, as we accept the Books of Scripture revealed to them, even though the People of the Book, Jews and Christians, do not accord equal love and respect to the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and blessings, or to the Holy Quran.

By constructing a mosque of the blessed Virgin Mary at Ephesus, we would be fostering the development of love between Christians and Muslims. It would be a place for sincere lovers of the Virgin from both noble traditions to meet and experience the sweetness of holy friendship.

CHAPTER TEN

A Supplication by the Author

O Allah Most High,
You have no partner and no equal.

O Most Beautiful of the beautiful,
You are the Master of the heavens and the earth,
Lord of all the physical universes,
known and unknown to us.
How can we ascribe to You a physical son,
or any other attribute of limitation?

You are Evident in Your Works,
Steadfast in Your Attributes,
All-Embracing in Your Essence,
and capable of all manifestation.

In Essence, You are Single.
In Attributes, You are Unity.
You are in need of nothing
yet everything has need of You.

Located nowhere,
You are everywhere.
You are not begotten,
nor does any being
come into being
apart from You.

Nothing whatsoever can be compared with You,
for you alone exist.

You are nearer to us than our own souls,
yet we are far from realizing You.
Draw us close to You with true affection.
Grant us union with You in love.

May our lips be adorned with Your Names,
and with Your Love may our hearts be beautified.
Satan finds no room in hearts filled with Your love.
We come to the gate of Your Mercy,
seeking only Your Divine Good Pleasure.

Make our eyes and hearts fit to behold Your Beauty.
May we possess lips made lovely
by the mention of Your beautiful Names,
and hearts that love You with the love You deserve.

We cause offense through our arrogance,
yet still You grant merciful recompense.
Rebellion and forgetfulness arise from us,
Forgiveness and Grace from You.
You shaped us from a drop in the womb,
and clothed our souls in blessed human form.

From humankind You chose
Your beloved Messengers and saints.
Paradise and mystic union You have prepared
for those who are human inwardly
as well as outwardly.
Make our inner world sublimely human,
as You manifest our outer form in human shape.

Express Your Divine Qualities through us.
Illumine our countenance
and brighten our dark and narrow heart.

Permit us to find supreme pleasure
in the service of humanity
and perfect delight in Your worship.

Admit us to Your Presence.
Include us among those
who stand before You in prayer,
who fall before You sincerely in prostration,
who glorify You, sanctify You
and love You without ceasing.

Unless You love us, how can we learn to love You?
Unless You admit us to Your most intimate Presence,
how shall we enter there?
Include us among those who enter Your Presence,
behold Your Beauty and attain Divine Unity.

O Lord,
give us eyes that weep with Your Love,
lips that mention Your beautiful Names,
and hearts that love You ceaselessly.

Employ our hands and feet in works
deserving Your Divine Good Pleasure.
Guard our minds from satanic whisperings.
Do not allow us to be obsessed with evil and ugliness,
but keep us in meditation
upon all nobleness and beauty.

Make us compassionate toward the poor
and helpful to those in need.
Keep us in good health.
Do not allow us to forget our true selves,
to be negative examples to our children,
or to die as slaves to any tyranny.

Though we have often disobeyed You,
You have not deprived us of our sustenance,
for one of Your Divine Names is Patience.
You always grant us sweet respite.

You are never negligent.
You do not disappoint us when we cry,
with all our hearts, *Allah, Allah!*

Make us joyous, we pray,
in honor of Adam Your Friend,
Noah Your Confidant,
Abraham Your Intimate Friend,
Moses Your Interlocutor.
In honor of the virtue and chastity of Mary
and the pure spirituality of Jesus.

In honor of Your beloved Messenger Muhammad,
Let our last words on earth be *Allah, Allah!*

May we die in perfect faith,
with the Glorious Quran as our witness.

May our tombs become gardens of Paradise,
fragrant with roses and filled with the light of faith.
When the awesome Day of Resurrection comes,
allow us to walk calmly and with dignity
to the Place of Assembly.
Let us gather there beneath the green banner of Praise,
close to Your beloved Seal of Prophecy.

Let us drink the luminous water of Kawthar
from the hand of the venerable Muhammad Mustafa,
may Allah bless him and give him peace.

And may we receive the water of that blessed stream
from Ali the Elect, from Fatima the Enlightened,
from Hasan the Chosen,
and from Husayn the Martyr of Karbalā.
Give us shelter in the shade of Your Throne
from the awesome power of that Final Day.

Make our good deeds weigh heavy
in the Balance of Justice,
and graciously allow us to enter Paradise.
May our faces be suffused with joy
when the records of our deeds are read.
Permit us to cross the Mystic Bridge
with lightning speed.

Include us among those who drown
in the infinite ocean of Your Bliss.
Deliver us from Hell through the intercession
of Your Beloved Muhammad,
and let us dwell in Paradise O Lord,
beside the beloved one of Allah.

Grant us, O Lord,
our highest goal,
the blissful vision of Your Beauty
and the realization of Your Unity.

O Lord,
protect us from the malice of our enemies
and keep us from the horrors of war.
Grant that humanity may learn to live in peace.

O Lord,
entrust the lovable Lady Feriha,
founder of the Masjid al-Farah in New York City,
to the care of the blessed Virgin Mary,
the noble Khadija and the noble Fatima.

May she be completely happy
and may her charitable goals be realized.
Grant health to her sweet and graceful person,
and increase the Divine Love residing in her heart.
Make her countenance more radiant still.

O Lord,
banish all sorrow from her breast.
Make her joyous always,
and assist her unceasingly in the good works
You have made her worthy to perform.

O Lord,
make her a refuge for Your spiritual lovers,
and grant her great joy and gladness
in this world and in Paradise.

O Lord, fulfill the wishes of her dear
and respected mother Aisha,
and keep her esteemed brothers and sisters
safe from all harm.
May their sorrows be turned into joy.

O Lord,
may her beloved husband Haydar
live to a ripe old age,
immune from sorrow and affliction.

O Lord,
to Haydar al-Karrār,
the indomitable Lion of Allah,
the Glorious Ali,
we pray that You entrust her gentle-hearted,
ever-smiling and good-natured husband,
that loyal servant of humanity,
that leader of artists and the arts,
that compassionate Haydar Bey,
who treats even his enemies with magnanimity,
and readily pardons those who do him wrong.
Make him happy in this world and in Paradise.

O Lord,
assist Nur in his work
of offering spiritual guidance to the people.

Make him resplendent with the light
of the Affirmation of Divine Unity.
Make him steadfast in Your Love
and pure of spirit through constant remembrance
and consecrated worship of You.

O Lord,
may Nur continue to bring to life
all dead hearts and longing souls,
offering the universal remedy for suffering and pain
and acting as a leader on the path of Truth.

O Lord,
sustain the teaching work of the reverend Tosun Bey,
the Sheikh of Spring Valley,
through whom I first came to meet
the noble lovers and seekers of America.
Maintain his role and station.

O Lord,
grant honor to Mukhtār Bey,
who has translated my humble works
into the English language.
Entrust him to the care of Ahmad Mukhtār,
the Chosen One of Allah.

O Lord,
grant supreme fulfillment
to the excellent Lady Ümid Hanim,
who acted as my assistant
while I was writing this short treatise.

O Lord,
grant good health
to the respected publisher of my work.
May his business prosper and his fortune increase.
May he be blessed with right guidance.

O Lord,
bestow Your Light of Guidance upon all
who read this essay
and who make it available to others.
May they enjoy the tender compassion
of the blessed Virgin Mary
and the powerful intercession of Jesus the Messiah.

O Lord,
bless those who pray for us while we live
and who remember us in their prayers
when we have left this world.

O Lord,
veil the faults of those
who graciously overlook the shortcomings
they may notice in this book.

O Lord,
make us happy by accepting our prayers,
in honor of Quranic Surahs *Tā-Hā* and *Yā-Sīn*
and in honor of Muhammad,
the living Quran,
and his blessed spiritual community.

Glory to the Lord of Majesty beyond description,
and peace be upon all His Messengers.

Grateful praise to Allah Most High,
Lord of the Worlds.

Alhamdulillahi rabbi-l-alamin.